

FATALITY



AFZF-SAFE

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, III CORPS AND FORT HOOD
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FORT HOOD, TEXAS 76544-5000



20 JUN 2006

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Weapons Mishandling Events Costly – Fatality Memo 06-11

1. Unsafe weapon handling recently claimed the life of a III Corps Soldier. While the Soldier was loading a .50 caliber crew served machine gun into a HMMWV cargo bed, the weapon discharged killing him and wounding several other Soldiers. While details of the weapon discharge are under investigation, several contributing factors are known. The weapon was not cleared of ammunition after its last use and the chain of command failed to ensure the weapon was cleared prior to it leaving the range.
2. Within III Corps, we have seen three Soldiers die as a result of accidental weapons discharge during the current Fiscal Year (FY). Army-wide, 45 accidental weapons discharges resulted in 10 fatalities and 40 injuries so far this year. For all of FY2005, the Army had 85 accidental weapons discharges that caused 15 deaths and 53 injuries. Historically, the major contributing factors to deadly or injury-producing accidental discharges are failure to follow procedures, improper/inadequate clearing of the weapon, and the untimely loading/unloading of a weapon.
3. Leaders and individuals should not consider any activity involving weapons low risk. Safe weapon handling requires proper supervision and the strict enforcement of standards. Every Soldier must take responsibility for his/her weapon and practice safe weapons handling procedures, to include proper muzzle awareness, at all times. Proper clearing procedures must be followed and enforced. Treat every weapon as if it were loaded; respect for a weapon will go a long way in preventing accidental weapon discharges. Do not allow yourself or those around you to become complacent around weapons and live ammunition.
4. As warfighters, our focus is on the Global War on Terrorism, but we are also challenged with home station accident prevention as well. Commanders must be innovative, committed, and determined to make a difference in protecting our Soldiers. Failure to execute and enforce safe weapons handling procedures and standards is not acceptable. We must continue to mentor our Soldiers and enforce standards to avoid senseless accidents.

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RAYMOND T. ODIERNO
Lieutenant General, USA
Commanding

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